Open Letter from Somerset, Owner of Bell Works

Dear Neighbors,

Thirteen years ago, we made a promise to Holmdel: that the historic former Bell Labs campus could be reimagined into a place that would serve this community for generations.

Today, Bell Works is that place. It's where residents gather for farmers markets and holiday events, where local businesses grow alongside national ones, and where our children come together to learn, play and explore. A building once destined for the wrecking ball is now, by almost any measure, a renowned success, and a place this community is proud to call its own.

That outcome was far from certain when we first presented our vision. Our original proposal for Bell Works was met with fear, skepticism, and in some cases, outright hostility. We were asking Holmdel to embrace a vision for a project unlike anything the town had seen before, and to trust us to pursue that vision while protecting the interests and character of the community.

We're proud of what we built here, but more importantly, we're proud that the confidence this community placed in us all those years ago has been rewarded. We made a promise to Holmdel, and we followed through.

That history is important as we consider the data center proposal now before the Planning Board. We want to speak with you directly about the proposal, the facts behind it and how we believe it can once again move this property forward in a way that serves Holmdel.

What's actually being proposed

In 2012, Holmdel adopted the Bell Works Redevelopment Plan and approved a data center as one of the permitted uses on this 472-acre site, alongside residential and sports uses. The plan went through public hearings and a Township vote, and was ultimately approved because the community understood that a project the scale of Bell Works needs a diverse mix of uses to remain financially sustainable for the long term and continue to serve the community for generations to come.

That need hasn't gone away. The data center now on the table is a continuation of an

intentional strategy put in place to ensure Bell Works is on solid footing for decades to come.

As laid out in the original Redevelopment Plan, our proposed project will replace an existing, aging structure in a remote area of the campus, well removed from the main Bell Works building.

What our community stands to gain

Since we acquired the property, the site has generated more than $60 million in PILOT payments to the Township. This project will build on that contribution, delivering millions of dollars in recurring tax revenue to the Township, without requiring a single additional resident to pay more in taxes or placing additional demands on municipal services. At a time when communities across New Jersey are under real financial pressure, that's meaningful new revenue, and it's the same principle that has kept this entire campus alive since the beginning.

We know data centers have drawn national attention, and that’s a reasonable thing for any community to think carefully about. But as that broader conversation has reached Holmdel, misinformation has begun to cloud the discussion. That doesn’t serve the community, particularly when this project has the potential to deliver meaningful economic and community benefits. With that in mind, we want to share the specific facts about what is actually being proposed here, so Holmdel residents can make their own judgment based on the full picture.

Here are the facts:

A fraction of the scale. At 40 megawatts, this facility is less than one-tenth the size of the 300 to 500-plus megawatt hyperscale data centers driving much of the recent public conversation.

Careful use of water. The facility will use a closed-loop cooling system that recirculates water through heat exchangers, requiring only an initial fill rather than a continuous draw from the municipal supply. As a result, water usage is expected to be significantly less than that of a typical gym or office building – not the millions of gallons per day associated with large evaporative-cooled campuses.

Working within existing infrastructure. JCP&L has confirmed it can serve this facility within existing infrastructure and available utility capacity, without requiring new transmission buildout or placing additional demand on Holmdel's municipal systems.

Minimal neighborhood impact. The facility sits in an isolated portion of the property, out of view from surrounding neighborhoods and roadways, and will not add traffic to local roads. New Jersey has strict standards governing noise generated by a site, and any noise from the completed facility will remain below state limits during both daytime and nighttime hours.

Where this goes from here

We know the Township Committee took action on data centers generally last week, and we respect that process. Our application was filed under the zoning Holmdel adopted in 2012, and it will now go through its own full review before the Planning Board.

We welcome questions and feedback, and are committed to providing the Holmdel community with the facts. Full project details, technical specifications and a running FAQ are posted at https://bell.works/lp/holmdel-data-center-faq/ and will be updated as the application moves through the public process.

We value our relationship with Holmdel and are proud to be part of this community. We look forward to continuing to contribute to its future.

Sincerely,
Ralph Zucker
Founder and CEO, Inspired by Somerset Development
Owner and developer of Bell Works